

ABC NIGHTLINE

1 June 1983

KOPPEL: The White House had no comment. The CIA had no comment, and the State Department went only a hair further. 'We don't comment on intelligence activities,' said state, 'but as a matter of policy, it is not the policy of the government of the United States to overthrow the government of Suriname.' That was all in response to a report by Carl Bernstein on this broadcast last night. In that report Bernstein quoted congressional sources as claiming that CIA Director William Casey told the House and Senate Intelligence Committees last December of a covert CIA plan to overthrow the government of Suriname. In the face of heated congressional opposition, the plan was reportedly dropped. Today the New York Times reported that its independent sources had confirmed that story and Bernstein reports that other congressional sources have now also confirmed it. A little later in this broadcast we will talk with Henry Kissinger, Richard Allen and Stansfield Turner about the pros and cons of covert activity. But first, Fred Marte, a leader of the Council for the Liberation of Suriname. Mr. Marte, the conditions in your country—you claim they are even worse than we have heard. How bad are they? MARTE: Well, Ted, they are very bad because to look at the Suriname situation, one should view them on two levels. The first is the level of the national unit in which we have to do, we are confronted with armed bands in a fragmented state which are terrorizing the majority of the people of Suriname. Now, 99% of the Suriname people are against these armed bands, and it is a matter of fact that conditions are far worser, worse than we've, you've heard here.

KOPPEL: Had you heard, let me just ask you first of all whether you had heard, and I mean has the CIA for example, been in touch with you or any of your colleagues, about providing assistance? MARTE: No, we don't, we know nothing whatsoever about CIA and CIA contacts. We are trying to liberate Suriname from (inaudible) in fact criminals, and we are determined to do that, and we have embarked on this course.

KOPPEL: Realistically speaking, is that the kind of thing you can do on your own? MARTE: Well certainly not. That, I think that, as I said to you already, 99% of the Suriname people are against this regime in Suriname, and I'm sure that the Suriname people will react on a certain moment against it. But if you permit me, because I was not here last night when Heidweiller and Bishop were on in the studio.

KOPPEL: You're speaking of the Ambassador of Suriname to the United States and the Prime Minister of Grenada. MARTE: Yes, sir. Well first of all, the ambassador said that Suriname was at the brink of racial violence and trouble in that country and that's why the military moved in, but that's not true, not at all, and the Suriname ambassador was the one who said this because one of the most precious export products is the fact that we Surinamers can cope peacefully with each other.

KOPPEL: Forgive me for interrupting because I'm going to try and focus on the subject that we're going to be discussing tonight and you can be helpful to me if you would. The question we're talking about is covert action and the CIA's role in that. From your point of view, and you are someone who would like to see the current government in your own country overthrown, is it the kind of thing that you would like to see, would you want to see covert help from the CIA? MARTE: Well as a matter of fact, we've talked to a lot of people, a lot of governments. The point is that because the situation in Suriname is that serious that whatever it comes from, it doesn't mean that I am allowing that I am saying that the CIA has been in touch with the council. I know nothing whatsoever about that kind of a contact, but you can say yes, that if we can get help to liberate the Suriname people we can get, we will get from every source we can. But that doesn't necessarily mean that the CIA has been in touch with us.

KOPPEL: I understand. Mr. Marte, thank you for joining us this evening. In a moment the history of covert CIA intervention in other countries since the end of World War II. Our guests will include former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, as we discuss whether such activities are an appropriate part of U.S. foreign policy; and later, the West reaps the disastrous spring floods and mudslides sown by last winter's record snow.

KOPPEL: Nearly everybody does it. Throughout modern history major world powers have engaged in secret activities to further their own national interest--covert actions that fall into a gray area somewhere between diplomacy and warfare. For the United States, covert actions are not new, but they have always been the object of debate. The issues: are such activities effective, and even if they are, should a democracy use such methods? Nightline correspondent Betsy Aaron looks at the record.

[CONTINUED]

AARON: The year was 1953. Iran's Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadegh was jailed, the government overthrown, the Shah reinstated. The CIA was involved. The year was 1954. Jacobo Arbenz, president of Guatemala, resigned. His government collapsed. The CIA was involved. There was CIA activity in Indonesia in the '50s, in Laos and Vietnam in the '60s. Angola in the '70s, assassinations in which the CIA was involved, Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, *Lumumba of the Congo. Chile in 1972: failing to prevent President Salvador Allende's election, the CIA launched a year-long operation to unseat him. On September 11, 1973, he was out and dead. Cuba rates a whole book on CIA activity--five known plots to assassinate Fidel Castro and in April, 1961, the Bay of Pigs, an army of Cuban refugees, trained, armed and guided by the CIA. (Network difficulties)...but not to an end to covert operations in Cuba, in the Caribbean or in Central and South America. After all, we in the United States had and still have a large stake in what happens in this part of the world. So said Secretary of State

John Foster Dulles in June, 1954, speaking on radio and television following Arbenz's overthrow in Guatemala. JOHN FOSTER DULLES: (June, 1954 Film Clip): The United States pledges itself to support not merely political opposition to communism but to help to alleviate conditions in Guatemala and elsewhere which might afford communism an opportunity to spread its tentacles throughout the hemisphere.

AARONS: Dulles in 1954; Reagan in 1983, speaking to a joint session of Congress. PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN: The national security of all the Americas is at stake in Central America. If we cannot defend ourselves there, we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere.

AARON: Given that premise, reports of covert activities against the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua are not surprising. UNIDENTIFIED REPORTER (Film Clip, February 18, 1982): Have you approved of covert activity to destabilize the present government of Nicaragua? REAGAN: Here again this is something upon which in national security interest I just, I will not comment.

AARON: In December, 1982, the House Intelligence Committee under Chairman Edward Boland passed the Boland Amendment prohibiting U.S. aid used for the purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua. Ever since then the Congress and the administration have been battling that one out, what monies are being used for what activities to overthrow or destabilize what government to protect whom from whom in Nicaragua. REAGAN: (April 14 Film Clip): We are not doing anything to try and overthrow the Nicaraguan government. We are complying with the law, the Boland Amendment, which is the law, with anything that we are doing that is aimed at interdicting supply lines and stopping this effort to overthrow the El Salvador government. REP. GERRY STUDDS (Foreign Affairs Committee): The covert activities being engaged in uncovertly by this administration cannot be justified.

CONTINUED

4.

AARON: Back in 1974 the CIA was rocked by revelations of domestic and foreign spying. The next year three committees were formed to investigate those activities. As a result, the CIA must now notify Congress of all covert actions, and during the four years of the Carter administration covert actions were kept to a bare minimum. With the arrival of the Reagan administration times have changed. In addition to Nicaragua there are allegedly actions underway in at least four countries, actions never officially admitted. Take Afghanistan; there is word, all unofficial, that we are arming the rebels. Here the president meets with Afghan fighters in the White House. And then there is Libya and our not so secret desire to see Khadafy disappear somehow, and Cambodia and Iran and Ayatollah Khomeini. Back in February, 1982, on this program Sen. Joseph Biden, a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee, said: SEN. JOSEPH BIDEN: There is not any great covert action going on that I am

aware of unless we are not being told the truth in the committee.

AARON: Today Sen. Biden says his statement was correct at the time, and he has no comment beyond that. Betsy Aaron for Nightline in New York.

KOPPEL: Nicaragua, Afghanistan, Libya, Iran. Is undercover subversion the way the United States government should be trying to get what it wants in such countries? We'll discuss that question in a moment as we talk with, among others, Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Former National Security Adviser Richard Allen. Later we'll focus on the disastrous floods and mudslides in the West. We'll talk about the factors this spring that caused them.

KOPPEL: The question whether the CIA's covert activities are effective, and even if they are, are they the sort of thing a democracy should be engaged in? With us now live to discuss that question from our New York studios, former secretary of state and Former National Security Adviser Dr. Henry Kissinger; from our Washington bureau Former National Security Adviser Richard Allen; and from our affiliate WJB in Baltimore, Republican Congressman William Goodling of Pennsylvania, a member of the House Intelligence Committee. Congressman, let me begin with you and have you tell us just what power it is that your committee has over the CIA, if any. Are they required to do anything beyond inform you? GOODLING: Well, they not only have to inform us, but they have to get their money from us to do whatever it is they want to do, and so I would think that we're rather powerful and influential as far as the CIA is concerned.

KOPPEL: That you must be, but the money is a wholesale operation, not retail. They don't come to you operation by operation, do they? GOODLING: No, they don't, but they can soon have their supply cut off as a matter of fact. Nothing is secret. I don't think there can be a covert activity in the United, carried on by the United States.

CONTINUED

5.

KOPPEL: Isn't there a rather large discretionary fund that is available to the director of the CIA over which you have no control? GOODLING: But it isn't very long until we would find that out, and ah, the mood of the Congress is such that that fund, too, would be taken care of.

KOPPEL: All right, let me have, if you can give it to me, your general attitude toward covert actions. What do you think justifies them? What do you think should cause them to be called off? GOODLING: Well, first of all, if the purpose of the covert activity is to destabilize an existing government, then I think it's morally wrong, and I think it's stupid foreign policy. There are many other opportunities for covert activity, activity for instance if a country is invaded or if a country

feels that they will be invaded and they wish to go the covert route, or if we think it's in our best interest to go that way, then I think it would be justified.

KOPPEL: Well, now short of destabilizing a government, what kinds of operations then are you saying Congress might approve, or you personally would approve? GOODLING: Well, I would approve, ah.... For instance, you talk about Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a country that has been invaded. I consider that totally different than an existing government that we might be trying to destabilize.

KOPPEL: Then I suppose the question would have to be, and let me ask it of you first, and then I'll go to our other guests. Why, if it is that clear-cut a manner, don't we just simply do it openly? Why don't we just say, 'Fine, we're going to support the rebels?' GOODLING: Simply because some countries find it very difficult to openly do things of that nature. Politically it is not the way they want to go. Sometimes politically it isn't in our best interest to overtly do those kind of things, and therefore you go the covert route.

KOPPEL: Do you have, or did you have when you were secretary of state, when you were national security adviser, any guidelines in your own head as to what it is that warrants covert action and what does not? KISSINGER: Before I answer that question I think I would like to point out some inaccuracies in the film that preceded these questions. It is my impression that the Senate investigating committees found out that the United States was not involved in assassination attempt, assassination attempts, and, ah, the film left the impression that the United States was. The cases that were mentioned were in an administration which I didn't serve, but I think it is important to find this out.

KOPPEL: Well, ah, the two cases that I think were, were mentioned were, was it Trujillo and Lumumba. KISSINGER: That's correct.

CONTINUED

6.

KOPPEL: And there's an excellent book, as you know, by the wife of a friend of both of ours, by *Madelaine Kalb on the Lumumba subject which seems to indicate quite clearly that the CIA was involved. KISSINGER: Well, ah, my recollection is that the Church committee which looked into this found to the contrary, but I haven't read the Kalb book, and I, ah, I can't comment on that.

KOPPEL: All right. As to the, as to the.... KISSINGER: Nor did I have guidelines in my mind as to what could or could not be done. There was a committee in my day, and I'm sure there's a committee today of an interdepartmental nature, which acted on recommendations for covert action. These were generally in an area in which, that fell between formal diplomacy and, ah, where, or where military action was appropriate. For example:

in many parts of the world there are communist-supported newspapers. There are all kinds of front organizations, and we thought it appropriate that those forces that could support a democracy had an opportunity to receive funds and where, if they received official governmental funds they would not be able to be effective. This was one sort of guideline. When you get to the destabilization of existing governments, you get to the borderline, and I agree with the congressman. There is nevertheless an area where if some country is of vital importance to the United States and where if it becomes, if it falls under communist control or Soviet control or Cuban control it would threaten the national security of the United States, then we have to look to the most effective means in which we can protect the national security of the United States, and it's very difficult to make abstract rules about this in advance.

KOPPEL: Well, let me ask you a specific question then, and I think I can ask it of you freely because you, you clearly are not involved in what this administration is doing. Would the case of Suriname fall under such a guideline? Would that.... Would that seem to be the sort of government that requires covert action to destabilize? KISSINGER: Well, I don't know too much about Suriname as such, but if the administration came to the conclusion that Suriname was on the verge of falling under Cuban control, and in light of the fact that the rule of Suriname had murdered all possible opposition, I would not be offended by the fact that the United States would prevent, seek to prevent another Cuban beachhead in Latin America.

KOPPEL: That raises then a question that perhaps has no part, or perhaps it should in foreign policy, and that is the question of morality. Let me ask it first of you Dr. Kissinger and then of Richard Allen. Where does, where does morality come in in all of this? KISSINGER: Well, ah, we have to believe that the defense of democratic values and of free institutions in the world is a moral objective, and therefore, if our government in its, on the pages of its firmest convictions comes to the view that freedom is threatened or the American national security is threatened, then it has to look for the most appropriate means

CONTINUED

to defend it. Now obviously you can make fun of this, and obviously one can, ah, one, there are borderline cases, and it should be done with great care, but the issue of morality I would define in these terms.

KOPPEL: When you speak of defending the free institutions and you speak of it in the context of using methods that, that must seem repugnant to some Americans, isn't there an internal conflict there? KISSINGER: Of course. In World War II Churchill supported Stalin against Hitler. He consider Stalin the lesser of two evils. Sometimes political leaders find themselves in the position where their only choice is among evils. Nor do I say that every time something happens that we do not like we should resort to covert action, nor should all covert actions be lumped in one category, but if after the most

prayerful consideration we conclude that there is an actual serious threat to the survival of free institutions in the world, then I would consider covert actions one of the instruments that, ah, that, that we should, that we should have at our disposal.

KOPPEL: Mr. Allen, when you were national security adviser, how did you resolve in your own mind this conflict between what is moral and what is perhaps practical or necessary from a foreign policy point of view? ALLEN: I think people in positions of power must always have the circumstances of morality clearly in mind when they make decisions of this type. I'd like to point out that this administration, at least at its outset, and I believe it still exists as a functional pattern, had an appropriate committee, an inter-agency committee that carefully considered all of the details attended to any covert action. This group, a very small group, met with the president, the vice president and the other relevant members of the Cabinet and other advisers as required, carefully went over the details in each and every instance, whereupon the president would, if he so chose, sign a finding, and that finding would be communicated to the appropriate committees of Congress by the director of Central Intelligence. This is not something that's done willy-nilly, Ted. It's not something that, ah, that necessarily involves the use of undemocratic or violent means, and I, I think perhaps the implication and the constant question of somehow everything that is done in the name of covert action is immoral or borders on immoral leaves the, the casual listener with the wrong impression.

KOPPEL: Well, let me, let me be a little more specific, then, and forgive me if I come back to Suriname once again because as you suggest, that is precisely what happened according to reports that we have, not only ours but also The New York Times reports the president did sign off, and Director Casey did go to the respective committees before the House and the Senate, and they were aghast and almost unanimously in both cases rejected the proposal. Now that clearly raises in my mind something more than just this rather naive public reaction to something that perhaps people don't understand. ALLEN: I'm not suggesting it's naive, but there may indeed have been a, a program which the administration thought feasible which might have involved,

CONTINUED

8.

under the guise of covert action, under the rubric of covert action support for forces that would oppose the government in Suriname. That may have been justified in the circumstances, and I believe the situation in Suriname ever since the present group took over in 1980 has been one of steady deterioration. I don't say that Suriname is absolutely vital to our national security or that a continued leftist movement or lurch in Suriname is going to threaten Brazil or Venezuela, but I think there is a legitimate interest in preventing, as Henry Kissinger has accurately pointed out, a new beachhead in this hemisphere.

KOPPEL: All right. Gentlemen, let's take a break. We'll continue our discussion in a moment when we'll be joined by a man who used to be in charge of the CIA's covert activities as well as its other operations, former CIA Director Stansfield Turner.

KOPPEL: Joining us live now from our Washington bureau, Admiral\Stansfield\Turner, former director of the CIA under President Jimmy Carter. Under your administration, Admiral Turner, there was less of a reliance, unless I'm mistaken, on covert action. Why? TURNER: Because in 1975 there were all these investigations of the intelligence activities of our country, and as a result of those there was an aversion to covert action. When we took over, the larder was bare. It was built up with the appropriate kinds of covert action over the years.

KOPPEL: Well, when you say an aversion to it, an aversion because you didn't have any money for it, an aversion because you were scared you would be caught, or an aversion because you didn't think it would work? TURNER: No, I think it was a public reaction to the Church committee report that led to a diminishing of covert action.

KOPPEL: There's an internal conflict here, and once again, it relates to the fact that you're operating within the strictures of a democracy, and that is ideally, covert action ought to be undertaken without anybody but the CIA knowing about it, but in a democracy you can't work it that way, so since that makes it a little bit impractical, might it not be a good idea just to dump them all together? TURNER: No. In our democracy we want to have some oversight, some control over the secret intelligence activities. We have to find a level of compromise in which there is enough disclosure to people like the intelligence committees of the Congress to give oversight and yet enough secrecy so that these covert actions and other clandestine activities of intelligence aren't spread all over the newspapers.

KOPPEL: And how do you feel that that balance is best achieved? TURNER: I think it's worked out very well over the seven years since President Ford opened that up with an executive order in February of 1976.

CONTINUED

9.

KOPPEL: If it is needed--and obviously national interest becomes the criterion by which all these things are measured--if it is needed, does the CIA or should the CIA stop at anything?
TURNER: Yes. There are lots of things the CIA would and should stop at. All three presidents since 1976 have ruled out any planning of or participation in assassination, for instance.

KOPPEL: Why? TURNER: It's a firm verboten. I think that is just beyond our moral reach.

KOPPEL: Oh, come on, now. I mean, if we're gonna go to war and we're gonna kill millions of people, why do we shrink from killing just one person? TURNER: Because your question that you've been dealing with tonight about morality and covert action to me comes down to the following. Any nation's going to do what it needs to preserve its security, but any nation that is smart is going to make sure that in preserving its security it doesn't undermine its basic principles, its democratic freedoms that we have in our country, and if you start on a track of assassination, I think you're going to undermine the foundations of the country that we cherish so much.

KOPPEL: Dr. Kissinger, you have not only been a statesman; you have not only had to work at this from a practical point of view; you're a scholar; you're a philosopher on this subject also--is it something that is indeed appropriate to a democracy or a democracy is somewhat naive? KISSINGER: No. I think it is appropriate, but I agree with Admiral Turner that I also would rule assassination out of bounds, and it was never planned or considered in any of the administrations in which I served.

KOPPEL: Well, then, tell me why, I mean, let, let me ask you to address that question. Since we don't draw the line at killing innocent civilians--I mean, perhaps we try not to, but when bombs fall, bombs fall. Why this curious sensitivity about the assassination of one man when it might prevent a war?

KISSINGER: Because for the United States to hire murderers on a clandestine basis is so contrary to our values that even though your question may be theoretically correct, it is something that we cannot in good conscience carry out as part of a covert operation. If we want to kill somebody, then it has to be as an overt action taken in full public view.

KOPPEL: Well, you've got to explain to me how that's possible. When do we do that short of war? KISSINGER: We can't do that short of war.

KOPPEL: All right. So then I suppose, Admiral Turner, I have to come back to you and say take us down the ladder, de-escalate for us a little bit. Where is the line drawn? TURNER: You have to draw the line based on a combination of how serious the problem is for the United States. The problem with Suriname is not very serious at all. Covert action is not an appropriate

10.

tool there. The country does not have that much interest in doing something in the dirty tricks department. You then balance how dirty is the dirty trick you've got to pull against how critical is the interest of the United States in that situation. It's a tough judgment, moral, ethical call in each instance.

KOPPEL: But I mean, if you're going to do it on the basis of how large or how critical a country is, you'd have to also rule out war, wouldn't you? I mean, the United States is not going to declare war on Suriname, so if it doesn't have any diplomatic

wedges or levers to use, why not covert activity? TURNER: Because it just is not of that great significance to us, because with the oversight procedures in our country, you should not undertake a covert action that you can't keep covert, one that people wouldn't agree on generally. It's going to leak through the administration or through the Congress.

KOPPEL: All right. TURNER: It's not going to be covert.

KOPPEL: You've raised a very practical consideration, and we'll pick up on that in a moment when we continue our discussion.

KOPPEL: Continuing our discussion now with Dr. Henry Kissinger, Richard Allen, Stansfield Turner and Congressman William Goodling. Congressman, your colleagues must have been a little bit upset when this story broke on Suriname. I mean, normally the question that Admiral Turner raised a moment ago, namely that these kinds of things have a tendency to leak, that's exactly what makes congressmen bristle, isn't it? GOODLING: Well, as I said at the beginning, I don't think this country can carry on a covert activity. We have a certain number of secretary of states that are colleagues of mine, but they like to play the game in front of television cameras. We have staff members who haven't been elected, but they like to be the power behind the throne, and yes, it makes me bristle because we shouldn't be on the committee as a matter of fact if we can't take the confidence that are placed in us and maintain them. (sic)

KOPPEL: All right. Just to set the record straight, when Director Casey came before your committee, you weren't on it, back last December. You only joined in January, didn't you? GOODLING: I joined in January.

KOPPEL: All right. Let me see if I understand what you just said, though. You seem to be suggesting we shouldn't be in covert activities at all because what? GOODLING: No, I never said that. I said that covert activities to destabilize existing governments are wrong morally and bad foreign policy.

CONTINUED

11.

KOPPEL: No, I was asking about the leaks, and you were talking about some of your colleagues who think the secretary of state, in other words people who talk too much, right? GOODLING: That's right. We are placed there because they had the confidence that we would keep those things we learned to ourselves and do the oversight that we're supposed to do and do it for the other 435 members, and that's the way it should be.

KOPPEL: Dr. Kissinger, can we deal with Congress? Can our administrations deal with Congress and expect that confidentiality will be maintained? KISSINGER: The record seems to indicate that we cannot. On the other hand, if we cannot, we are going to deprive ourselves of a tool that our opponents are using in any event much more than we do and which

I consider in many respects essential, so I think the solution is to tighten up our procedures.

KOPPEL: Richard Allen, how is that done? How does one tighten up the procedures so that both masters can be served, so that the government still has that flexibility but the Congress is kept informed? ALLEN: In my personal view, I think the most important thing we can do is to begin to build the basis of genuinely bipartisan foreign policy and take foreign policy and national security actions, under which covert actions would necessarily fall, out of the realm of partisan politics. We have a situation now in which it is extremely difficult to do business with the Congress simply because there are too many cooks, so to speak, in the broth, yet there is the responsibility of oversight. I think that this administration has taken some wise steps and has created some of the basis for developing into ultimately a bipartisan foreign policy. I'd like to see this process continue. Otherwise, I don't know how we can continue, because one party, for whatever reason, may want to hold the other party up to ridicule and scorn and to political embarrassment. This is bad business, very bad foreign policy as well.

KOPPEL: Is it, I don't even know if it's constitutionally possible, but does it make any sense--you spoke before of the committee that meets with the president and the vice president. Would it make any sense to turn that into a bipartisan committee and have a member of Congress or a couple of members of Congress sitting on that committee with the president, with the vice president, with all the members of the intelligence community? ALLEN: I would think that would be constitutionally very difficult, and both the administration and the member, respective members of Congress would resist that, but perhaps there could be developed certain better mechanisms of communication that go beyond the, one might say the mere informing of the members of Congress by the director of Central Intelligence. I say perhaps because this is a very, very difficult area. I would say that once the general atmosphere for creating bipartisan foreign policy in the genuinely national interest would develop, then indeed we may have the chance of greater cooperation in such instances as the one you suggest.

CONTINUED

12.

KOPPEL: All right. Admiral Turner, give us a final view, then, from the vantage point of a former director of the Central Intelligence Agency. Can you or can you not work with Congress?

TURNER: Yes. During my four years, we had almost leaks on the subject of covert action, but administrations must recognize that when we established oversight, we in effect forsook the possibility of doing controversial covert actions, 'cause controversial covert actions will leak as they have in Nicaragua and Suriname. There is a limit that we can go to nowadays because of the oversight process. That's a sacrifice we have made in order to have oversight.